

American energy production, cut regulations, and embrace pro-growth commonsense policies. The American people deserve that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I am pleased to rise today and join my colleagues from West Virginia and Mississippi, and I join them to, once again, call attention to the disastrous effects of President Biden's price hikes and his policies.

Americans are facing soaring inflation that has not been seen in generations. Price increases families are seeing at the grocery store, at the pump, in monthly electric bills, and for basic housing needs have far outpaced wage gains and left Americans struggling to make ends meet.

The numbers speak for themselves. In 2022, annual average inflation reached 8 percent, the highest level in 40 years. Rather than working to solve the problem, the Biden administration seems set on making it worse. You don't need to look any further than your kitchen to find the latest example.

In 2022, the food-at-home price index, which measures grocery prices, rose 18.6 percent—18.6 percent—reaching heights not seen since the Carter administration. This rise in food prices is directly related to increases in the cost of production faced by our hard-working farmers and ranchers.

These increases are driven by the Biden administration's continued regulatory overreach, failure to empower our domestic energy producers, and failed economic policies. Our producers are facing increased prices for diesel fuel, fertilizer, and for crop protection products, and more. New regulations from this administration threaten to drive up the cost of production even further.

The recently published "Waters of the United States," or WOTUS, is a prime example of regulations that will stifle our agriculture and energy industries and make inflation worse. Instead of this disastrous rule—this WOTUS rule—we should take a States-first approach to protect our land and water that respects private property rights. This comes on top of the administration's misguided approach to domestic energy production, which has caused us to increase our reliance on foreign energy suppliers, which has increased the price of the gallon of gasoline by more than \$1 since the administration took office—more than \$1 a gallon.

We should be empowering our domestic energy producers, including those in my State of North Dakota, to restore our energy independence, reduce our reliance on foreign oil imports, create more jobs here at home, and help reduce prices for consumers. We need to unleash America's vast energy reserves. That is the right solution to lower prices and help provide hard-working families and businesses relief

from the record inflation that has been caused by the policies of the Biden administration.

The Biden administration needs to stop doubling down on failed economic policies. The administration needs to get government out of the way and focus on the fundamentals. That includes increased domestic energy production, securing our border, and taking meaningful action to reduce inflation.

I yield the floor.

S. RES. 21

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the resolution designating January as "National Trafficking and Modern Slavery Prevention Month."

I am proud to introduce this resolution every year to raise awareness about the ongoing atrocities of human trafficking. We must continue to support the ongoing partnerships between governments, nonprofits, service providers, and survivors, who are all working to end human trafficking.

The human trafficking industry generates an estimated \$150 billion in illegal profits a year. And human trafficking impacts 50 million victims around the world. Many of the victims of human trafficking are often difficult to identify and are subjected to manipulation, force, fraud, and abuse. We cannot turn a blind eye to ongoing exploitation and forced labor in our country and throughout the world. We have a responsibility to raise awareness of these horrendous acts, ensure victims understand that they are not alone, and provide legislative solutions to support and protect survivors.

Last Congress, I was able to work with my Senate colleagues to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. By designating January as "National Trafficking and Modern Slavery Prevention Month," we will shine a light on the issue and continue the bipartisan charge to end trafficking and exploitation.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we start the vote immediately.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON S. RES. 21

The question is on adoption of S. Res. 21.

Ms. SMITH. Can we have the yeas and nays, please?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator

from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 4 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Barrasso	Grassley	Reed
Bennet	Hagerty	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hassan	Risch
Blumenthal	Hawley	Romney
Booker	Heinrich	Rosen
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Braun	Hirono	Sanders
Britt	Hoeven	Schatz
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Capito	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kennedy	Shaheen
Carper	King	Sinema
Casey	Klobuchar	Smith
Cassidy	Lankford	Stabenow
Collins	Lee	Sullivan
Coons	Lujan	Tester
Cornyn	Lummis	Thune
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tillis
Cotton	Markey	Tuberville
Cramer	Marshall	Van Hollen
Crapo	McConnell	Vance
Cruz	Menendez	Warner
Daines	Merkley	Warnock
Duckworth	Moran	Warren
Durbin	Mullin	Welch
Ernst	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wicker
Fetterman	Ossoff	Young
Fischer	Padilla	
Gillibrand	Paul	

NOT VOTING—3

Murkowski Rubio Wyden

The resolution (S. Res. 21) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Under the previous order, the preamble is agreed to and the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to celebrate the success of the Affordable Care Act. We just completed the open enrollment period for 2023. Over 16 million Americans signed up for health coverage under the Affordable Care Act. That is about a 100-percent increase from the first year's enrollment in 2014. In less than 10 years, we have doubled the number of enrollees under the Affordable Care Act.

It has contributed to a substantial reduction in the number of uninsured, which, in and of itself, is an important goal in healthcare. Uninsured individuals have less ability to access quality

care in this country. That is something we all need to be concerned about and do our best to make sure everyone has access to healthcare.

But they also contribute to what is known as cost-shifting, and it causes a dislocation of healthcare facilities in the proper locations in our community. It also makes our healthcare system less efficient. If an individual does not have coverage for preventive healthcare and diseases are discovered later, it makes it more expensive and less likely a successful result.

We all can celebrate the numbers but recognize we also are taking a big bite out of the uninsured medical population in this country. My numbers in Maryland are very impressive: 180,000 Marylanders enrolled in our State insurance exchange under the Affordable Care Act. That is, by the way, for minorities, a 9-percent increase in the Hispanic population and a 3-percent increase in the Black population. We are committed to eliminating health disparities in America.

There are many provisions in the Affordable Care Act. I want to mention one I am particularly proud of because I had something to do with its creation, and that is elevating the National Institutes of Health with the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. We made it a full Institute under NIH. We set up an office for minority health within the Health and Human Services Agencies. We did this so there would be a focus on dealing with the systemic challenges we have to medical care in this country. And the research that is being done by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities is cutting edge on reasons why we have disparities in this country, and it is leading to corrective action being taken.

I will just give you one example: NIH UNITE Program, which deals with incentives to create a more diversified workforce in healthcare, which is critically important to access, as well as to make sure that clinical trials include all of our population so that the results are meaningful for all communities in America.

The results that we have been able to move forward in bridging the disparities for access to healthcare in America, all this has been done under the Affordable Care Act.

But we didn't stop there. We recognized we had to improve the Affordable Care Act. I am very proud of the leadership of President Biden and the Democrats in our initiatives under the American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act. We enhance the subsidies to make it affordable for all Americans to be able to purchase their insurance through the health exchanges. We made that a commitment so every American could have access to affordable, quality healthcare.

We need to make those enhancements permanent so we still have work to do. I want to thank our colleague

Senator SHAHEEN for her leadership in legislation, which I strongly support, that would make the enhancements in the subsidies under the Affordable Care Act permanent so that we can keep having these impressive numbers of Americans enrolling in health insurance.

Americans are benefiting from the Affordable Care Act, not just in having comprehensive, affordable insurance coverage but also the quality of that coverage. No longer do they have to worry about exclusions for preexisting conditions. It wasn't too long ago that just about everyone in this country was concerned as to whether their insurance coverage would cover their entire healthcare needs because they had a prior episode sometime in their life. Women were concerned whether childbirth was a preexisting condition. Well, we eliminated that fear with the Affordable Care Act in that insurance companies cannot exclude coverage or limit coverage based upon preexisting conditions.

And as you recall, the leading cause of bankruptcy in America was unpaid medical bills. But under the Affordable Care Act, we eliminated lifetime and yearly caps on the coverage that you have—again, helping American families deal with their healthcare needs.

There is still more to be done. I want to acknowledge that. We need to do some things.

I want to say, first, that I was pleased that under the Inflation Reduction Act, we were able to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Insulin, starting last month—January—was limited to \$35 a month. That was a game changer for millions of Americans to know they have an affordable supply of insulin to deal with their needs. That has already taken effect. And included in the Inflation Reduction Act will be a cap on Part D out-of-pocket expenses of no more than \$2,000 a year. So we are also capping today the unlimited exposures seniors had on prescription medicines.

I must tell you, we passed legislation—as I think everybody here is aware of—under the Inflation Reduction Act, to start, by 2026, doing something that most Americans would be shocked that we are not doing today: negotiate prices with the pharmaceutical industry, using our market share to bring down the cost of medicines so American consumers are not gouged compared to the international marketplace. Starting in 2026, we will have negotiated the price, starting with the 10 most expensive drugs in this country.

I want to mention an area where I think we need to do more. I have been very much engaged in oral healthcare. Most people know that when I came to the Senate in 2006, a year later, Deamonte Driver, a youngster in Prince George's County, lost his life because he couldn't get access to oral healthcare. I made that a crusade with my former colleague, the late Elijah

Cummings, in trying to do something about that. I am pleased that both the Affordable Care Act and the Children's Health Insurance Program require coverage for pediatric dental care. That is a step in the right direction, but we haven't completed the needs that are out there.

If you neglect your oral healthcare, you are likely to be neglecting your general healthcare. It is an area where we can prevent a lot of illness and problems. Most dental problems are preventable if you have access to dental care.

I have introduced legislation that would remove any annual or lifetime limit on oral healthcare under the Children's Health Insurance Program, the CHIP program. I want to thank Senator STABENOW for joining me in this effort. To me, this is something that is very consistent with the Affordable Care Act, and I hope that we will be able to get that passed.

But we also have to expand coverage. Medicaid coverage for dental care is primarily determined by the States, and many States limit coverage to emergency dental care, which means people, many families, can't afford their normal checkups for the adults who are in the family. We must do better as a nation. We need to expand Medicaid to cover oral healthcare. And for the 37 million seniors who are on Medicare, many cannot afford their dental annual visits. We need to expand Medicare to cover dental care as well. I want to thank my friend Senator SANDERS for his leadership, also, on that particular issue. The bottom line: Let us all work together so that we can achieve the goal of the Affordable Care Act. We have achieved a great deal to date by the passage of that bill, but we still need to do more to make sure healthcare is a right and not a privilege and that every American has access to affordable, quality care. Working together, we can achieve that goal.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### DEBT CEILING

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, let me begin with a simple statement which I hope every Senator in this body agrees with: that the United States of America pays its bills on time.

We have since our Nation was founded. We never default on our debts. We always pay what we owe. We honor our financial obligations to all Americans and all those who invest in the American economy. And because we pay our bills on time, the United States has earned a reputation as a reliable, credible, and trustworthy partner around